

3.1.2 Bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need

3.1.2.1 Overview

There are 284 native bird species for which Wisconsin provides important breeding, wintering, or migratory habitat. Of these 284 species, 84 (30%) have been identified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Wisconsin. Twenty-four of these are currently listed as Threatened or Endangered in Wisconsin and two are listed as federally Threatened or Endangered. Species of Greatest Conservation Need are divided into three groups based on their relative abundance in Wisconsin in comparison with the rest of their range. These divisions address the global role Wisconsin plays in the conservation of these species but leave options open for management.

Table 3-2. Bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need

Species with a high relative abundance in Wisconsin compared with the rest of their range		
Common Name	Scientific Name	Page
American Bittern	<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>	3-19
Canvasback	<i>Aythya valisineria</i>	3-32
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>	3-35
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	3-39
Northern Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	3-41
American Woodcock	<i>Scolopax minor</i>	3-82
Black-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus erythrophthalmus</i>	3-94
Red-headed Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i>	3-103
Willow Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii</i>	3-111
Least Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax minimus</i>	3-113
Veery	<i>Catharus fuscescens</i>	3-116
Brown Thrasher	<i>Toxostoma rufum</i>	3-120
Blue-winged Warbler	<i>Vermivora pinus</i>	3-126
Golden-winged Warbler	<i>Vermivora chrysoptera</i>	3-128
Connecticut Warbler	<i>Oporornis agilis</i>	3-142
Canada Warbler	<i>Wilsonia canadensis</i>	3-146
Field Sparrow	<i>Spizella pusilla</i>	3-150
Vesper Sparrow	<i>Poocetes gramineus</i>	3-152
Henslow's Sparrow	<i>Ammodramus henslowii</i>	3-158
Bobolink	<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	3-163
Eastern Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella magna</i>	3-165
Species with a moderate to low relative abundance in Wisconsin compared with the rest of their range		
Common Name	Scientific Name	Page
Horned Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>	3-15
Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i>	3-17
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	3-21
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>	3-25
Trumpeter Swan	<i>Cygnus buccinator</i>	3-26
American Black Duck	<i>Anas rubripes</i>	3-28
Blue-winged Teal	<i>Anas discors</i>	3-30
Redhead	<i>Aythya americana</i>	3-34
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	3-37
Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	3-43
Red-shouldered Hawk	<i>Buteo lineatus</i>	3-45
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	3-47
Spruce Grouse	<i>Falcipennis canadensis</i>	3-48
Greater Prairie-Chicken	<i>Tympanuchus cupido</i>	3-50
Sharp-tailed Grouse	<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus</i>	3-52
Northern Bobwhite	<i>Colinus virginianus</i>	3-54
Yellow Rail	<i>Coturnicops noveboracensis</i>	3-56
King Rail	<i>Rallus elegans</i>	3-58

Species with a moderate to low relative abundance in Wisconsin compared with the rest of their range <i>continued</i>		
Common Name	Scientific Name	Page
Whooping Crane	<i>Grus americana</i>	3-60
American Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	3-62
Solitary Sandpiper	<i>Tringa solitaria</i>	3-66
Upland Sandpiper	<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>	3-68
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	3-70
Hudsonian Godwit	<i>Limosa haemastica</i>	3-72
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	3-76
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	<i>Tryngites subruficollis</i>	3-78
Short-billed Dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus griseus</i>	3-80
Wilson's Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>	3-84
Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>	3-86
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	3-88
Forster's Tern	<i>Sterna forsteri</i>	3-90
Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	3-92
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	3-96
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	3-99
Whip-poor-will	<i>Caprimulgus vociferus</i>	3-101
Black-backed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides arcticus</i>	3-105
Olive-sided Flycatcher	<i>Contopus cooperi</i>	3-107
Acadian Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax virescens</i>	3-109
Boreal Chickadee	<i>Poecile hudsonica</i>	3-115
Wood Thrush	<i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>	3-118
Bell's Vireo	<i>Vireo bellii</i>	3-124
Black-throated Blue Warbler	<i>Dendroica caerulescens</i>	3-130
Cerulean Warbler	<i>Dendroica cerulea</i>	3-134
Prothonotary Warbler	<i>Protonotaria citrea</i>	3-136
Worm-eating Warbler	<i>Helmitheros vermivorus</i>	3-137
Louisiana Waterthrush	<i>Seiurus motacilla</i>	3-138
Kentucky Warbler	<i>Oporornis formosus</i>	3-140
Hooded Warbler	<i>Wilsonia citrina</i>	3-144
Dickcissel	<i>Spiza americana</i>	3-148
Lark Sparrow	<i>Chondestes grammacus</i>	3-154
Grasshopper Sparrow	<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>	3-156
Le Conte's Sparrow	<i>Ammodramus leconteii</i>	3-160
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow	<i>Ammodramus nelsoni</i>	3-162
Western Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>	3-167
Rusty Blackbird	<i>Euphagus carolinus</i>	3-169
Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	3-170
Species with a very low relative abundance in Wisconsin compared with the rest of their range		
Common Name	Scientific Name	Page
Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>	3-23
Piping Plover	<i>Charadrius melodus</i>	3-64
Marbled Godwit	<i>Limosa fedoa</i>	3-74
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	3-97
Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	3-122
Yellow-throated Warbler	<i>Dendroica dominica</i>	3-132
Kirtland's Warbler	<i>Dendroica kirtlandii</i>	3-133

3.1.2.2 General Threats, Issues and Conservation Actions

General Threats and Issues Affecting Bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need

Habitat conversion is the primary threat facing bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Wisconsin. For example, continued loss and fragmentation of forest habitat in southern Wisconsin from housing and road development threatens many of our forest dwelling species. Similarly, grassland species suffer from loss and fragmentation of grassland habitat due to factors such as rural housing development and conversion of idle grassland (including pasture) to row crops or tree plantations. Shorebirds that utilize ephemeral mudflats and shallow-flooded fields for resting and feeding sites during spring and fall migration are threatened by the draining of this habitat for agriculture and housing development. Many invasive plant species such as buckthorn, reed canary grass, purple loosestrife and garlic mustard can degrade the quality of important nesting and foraging habitats, while predation by non-native animals such as brown-headed cowbirds and feral cats can negatively impact populations of many species. Contamination of habitats from heavy metals such as lead and chemicals including PCBs and DDT both here and on wintering grounds in Central and South America are well known threats to many species. Changes in ecological processes such as the succession of grassland habitats to shrubland and woodland due to lack of fire or other management to suppress woody growth is a threat to many grassland species. Specific threats and issues for each bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need are listed in the following species summaries.

General Conservation Actions for Bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need

Restoration, management, and protection of grasslands, wetlands, and large blocks of forested habitat are primary actions proposed for conserving bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Wisconsin. Additional research is needed to adequately and more effectively work to conserve many species and their habitats. Research needs include surveys to identify critical conservation areas, long term monitoring to detect population trends, and specific projects to determine habitat requirements and impacts of varying habitat management strategies. It is also important to work closely with policy makers to keep agricultural set-aside and wetland restoration programs in place, especially those that allow for permanent protection of habitats, and to support laws and policies that prevent degradation and fragmentation of habitats through activities such as rural home development in large, intact grassland areas. Creating and maintaining effective partnerships of agencies, non-governmental organizations and the public are key to accomplishing many of these conservation actions. Specific conservation actions proposed for each bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need are listed in the following species summaries.

References for Specific Threats, Issues and Conservations Actions for Bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need

The following references, along with personal observations, unpublished data, and Wisconsin DNR technical reports provide background or justification for the specific threats, issues, and conservation actions listed in the following summaries for each bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

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